

Contributing Open Citations to Wikipedia: An OA Week OAbot Edit-A-Thon

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Wikipedia, the fifth most accessed site, attracts people of different cultural backgrounds from all over the world. The daily average of page views this year for the English version of the online encyclopedia has exceeded 251 million views.¹

Ignoring Wikipedia's reach would be a mistake. People are drawn to Wikipedia not just for a quick reference, but also to read more about the subject they are researching and to use the references to find additional sources. These references are the heart of Wikipedia articles; they lead readers to a lot more information, mostly from reputable and reliable sources. That is, if the links to the sources are freely accessible. Many of the links in the citations of Wikipedia articles are actually to journal articles that are behind a paywall. This means that only those of us with the means to purchase access or those of us affiliated with an institution that has a subscription to the journal will be able to use the article. Although Wikipedia is a free source, a paywall to a reference means that information disparities make it more difficult to verify statements in its articles and decreases its value for many of its users.

An initiative by The Wikipedia Library in conjunction with a wiki-user and developer from the Dissemin project aims to address this issue. The OAbot, hosted by the Wikimedia Foundation Labs, extracts an existing citation from a Wikipedia article and presents the user with that citation and a potential link to an open version of the same article. These open version links are extracted from sources including CrossRef, BASE, DOAI, and others. Once the user determines that the link to the open version of the article is a match and the "Add Link" button is clicked, the bot translates the url to one of the following parameters, as applicable, |arxiv=, |hdl=, |doi=, |pmc=, |citeseerx=, or |url=, and adds it (using a citation template) alongside the existing citation for the paywalled version.² Adding citation templates rather than free form citations allow for a more structured and consistent output. In determining whether or not the suggested link should be added, as outlined on the OAbot homepage, users should make sure that the existing citation is behind a paywall or missing the link to the source. Also, the newly suggested link should point to a matching source that

¹ Siteviews Analysis. Wikimedia Foundation Labs 31 Oct. 2017.

<https://tools.wmflabs.org/siteviews/?platform=all-access&source=pageviews&agent=user&range=this-year&sites=en.wikipedia.org>

² "Wikipedia: OABOT." Wikipedia 31 Oct. 2017. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:OABOT>

is accessible in accordance with copyright policies; the project discourages linking to pirated versions and other forms of copyright violation.¹ In cases where these parameters are not met, the user has the option to “Skip” the suggested citation and the bot automatically presents a new citation and suggested free version. The tool also provides a button to “Preview” the existing code for the structured citation on a text panel on the left and on the right panel the integration of the suggested citation is highlighted on the citation template (Figure 1). This reaffirms users that changes made are actually an addition and not a replacement of the existing citation.

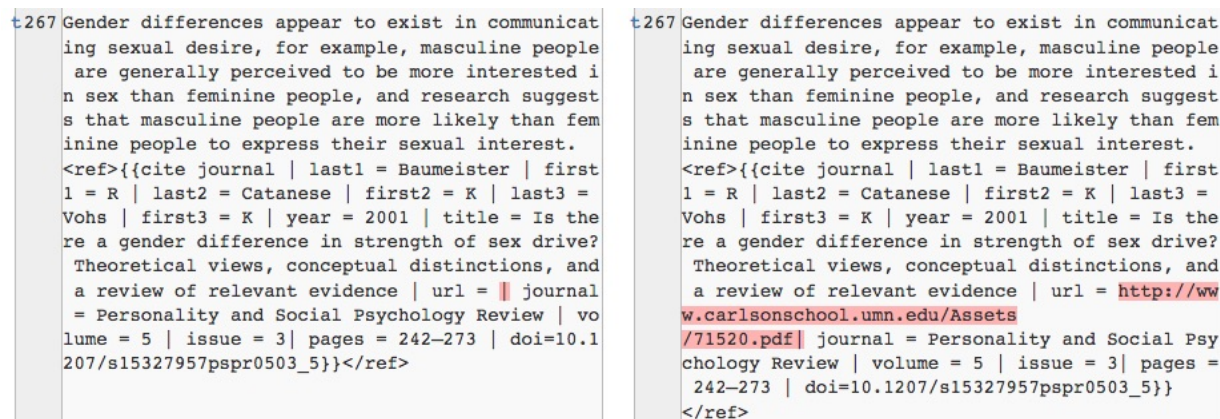


Figure 1: Preview panel for OAbot Wikipedia edits.

Hosting an OAbot Wikipedia Edit-a-thon for Open Access Week

The theme of the 10th Annual International Open Access Week was “Open in Order to ...”. The unended phrase invited participants in OA Week to think about “what openness enables.”² One of the things that open enables is the democratization of knowledge sharing. Wikipedia provides an obvious example of how open scholarship results in other openly created knowledge products. When readers can easily retrieve an open access version of an article from a reference list, they can more readily verify the content of the Wikipedia article. At the same time, these readers can extend their knowledge of the subject. Some of them might even decide to enrich the Wikipedia article with additional content and references.

As librarians, editing Wikipedia articles gives us an opportunity to use the “Open in Order to” concept to build a better information source for information users, near and far. Providing access to freely accessible sources ensures that everyone, given the right circumstances, can retrieve and use that information. The library community is also

¹ “The Wikipedia Library/OAWiki/Copyright and OA.” Meta Wiki 31 Oct. 2017.

https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/The_Wikipedia_Library/OAWiki/Copyright_and_OA

² Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC). “10th Annual International Open Access Week Shines Spotlight on Increasing the Impact of Research & Scholarship.” SPARC. 23 Oct. 2017.

<https://sparcopen.org/news/2017/10th-annual-international-open-access-week-shines-spotlight-increasing-impact-research-scholarship/>

interested in taking steps to make Wikipedia a more reliable and verifiable encyclopedia. At the IUPUI University Library, we decided to make our contribution to this effort by using the OAbot during Open Access Week to find free online versions of sources to be included in already existing Wikipedia citations. A combined count of contributions among seven participants from the library, as shown on the OAbot leaderboard, resulted in 343 edits -- 18.5% of all contributions made from people all over the world.¹ Being able to easily see contributions by others served as an inspiration to some of our colleagues who found themselves wanting to maintain a place at the top of the contributors' list.

How can librarians help to make Wikipedia sources more accessible?

Participating in initiatives like this one aligns with our library mission to provide access to reliable and freely accessible information. Our hope is that the OAbot continues to be developed and used by other Wiki contributors. In the meantime, one thing we can all do to ensure that the bot finds freely accessible sources in our repositories is to check for a valid OAI-PMH (Open Archives Initiative - Protocol for Metadata Harvesting) interface. This will provide BASE (Bielefeld Academic Search Engine) with the ability to harvest our data to be used during the citation matching process.

Using the OAbot to edit Wikipedia entries was fun and rewarding. We look forward to facilitating future Wikimedia-related, library-supported events at IUPUI.

¹ "OAbot: leaderboard." Wikipedia 31 Oct. 2017. <https://tools.wmflabs.org/oabot/stats>